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ABSTRACT

The most striking general features of the Danish education system are these: a high degree of centralization, learner-centeredness, open access, precisely defined conditions of service for teachers, and virtually non-existent training for educational managers. Education is compulsory for children between the ages of 7 and 16 years. Optional preschool classes are available. At the upper secondary level, education traditionally prepares students for entry to higher education. The Danish vocational education system offers a far more integrated and coordinated national system than does the British. In addition to two- to four-year apprenticeship training, basic vocational education has a prerequisite of nine years of compulsory schooling and lasts between three and five years. Vocational education is organized into eight main fields. Each field involves two parts: a basic year and between two and four additional years. Most fundamental problems in establishing vocational training programs center on the mismatch between supply and demand. Other forms of vocational training include permanent programs for training semi-skilled workers and for retraining and upgrading skilled workers and special programs for prevocational training for young people, adult retraining, long-term unemployed adults, and migrant workers. A wide range of measures has been undertaken to combat youth unemployment. (YLB)

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Vocational education and training in Denmark

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Foreword and acknowledgements

This paper is the outcome of a fortnight's study visit to Copenhagen and surrounding area in May/June 1983, during which time I interviewed 20 respondents in educational establishments, government offices and a job centre. I owe a debt of gratitude to the Danish Ministry of Education who organised my programme - and who, at very short notice, met my requests for additional visits - and to the individuals who took considerable time and trouble on my behalf. I have also drawn extensively on published material, especially that provided by the Ministry, to supplement my own impressions wherever possible with factual data.

Although my brief was to look at vocational education I have set my account within the context of Danish education generally, since the learners on vocational courses are the products of the school system and their path represents one available alternative in post-compulsory education. To a far greater extent than is the case in Britain, the Danish system is indeed a 'system', centrally organised and regulated, and with more extensive facilities for student transfer and for 'second-chance' adult learners. An understanding of any part of that system requires some awareness of the broader setting.

When I consider the complexities of our own educational system and the attendant difficulties of trying to grasp the varied activity which it encompasses, I am only too aware of the limitations which must arise from so brief an acquaintance with another national system. What follows is offered as a sketch rather than a finished composition.

Ernest Theodossin
October 1984

I Denmark and Britain

Comparative studies are inevitably fraught with the danger of contrasting like with unlike. This must be particularly so for British readers confronted by this survey of Danish vocational education. In many respects the two countries are strikingly dissimilar. Denmark is geographically less than a fifth the size of Britain and possesses, with a population of approximately 5.1 million, less than 10 per cent of the number of our inhabitants (OECD 1983). In comparing Denmark and Britain one is referring to a relatively small and a relatively large country.

However, size alone is not necessarily the most striking difference between the two countries. As a first-time visitor to Denmark, I was impressed much more by the general appearance of greater prosperity, not merely in the solidity of the architecture, the lushness of interior furnishing, the abundance at table and the generally higher prices demanded in the shops (particularly for the many imported goods), but also in the general absence of those extremes of comparative wealth and poverty which are to be found in most large British conurbations. In Denmark the slum and the stately home are less evident, and the average standard of living seems to be of a comparatively higher standard. The Danes dress more casually than we do in Britain and they appear less concerned with social status distinctions, so that - in, for example, a school - it is altogether less easy to observe instantly who is an 'ordinary' teacher and who is the principal. On the other hand, the surroundings are likely to be of an opulence and cleanliness which would be exceptional in Britain: more space/light per student, smaller classes, better equipment, and a prevailing sense of an ordered society with a high level of respect for its material prosperity. When teachers complained about the inadequacy of such conditions, it was generally because they considered that even clean, spacious, well equipped working spaces were no substitute for purpose-built accommodation.

This private impression of comparative affluence is borne out by published statistics of the kind used for comparative purposes by the OECD (1983). Per capita, the Danish gross domestic product (GDP) is approximately a third higher than the British. The Danish government spends a larger proportion of the GDP on goods/services in general and on education in particular. Also in per capita terms, the indicators of living standards show that the Danes have a higher private consumption rate, own more telephones and television sets, have more doctors per 1000 inhabitants, lower infant mortality, a larger proportion (57.4 per cent) of the 15-19

age group in full time enrolment than in Britain (46.2 per cent), and, statistically, can expect to live longer. About the only feature on which we may console ourselves is that they own 15 per cent fewer cars per 1000 population, but they also have shorter distances to cover and a strikingly superior public transport system.

EGALITARIANISM

A second somewhat remarkable comparative feature of Danish life is an apparent greater commitment to egalitarianism. This is evinced in part by the more informal approach to clothing and the absence of extremes of wealth and poverty noted above, by the possession of one of the most 'democratic' of European royal families, and by the prevailing bourgeois ethos: of course there are rich and poor in Denmark, but they all seem comparatively middle-class. These features are also visible in the absence of a hierarchical career structure in the Danish education service, by the open 'lottery' approach to student recruitment, and by a much more professional (rather than vocational) set of assumptions about the nature of teaching and the responsibilities of the teacher. The prevalence of far more consistently democratic attitudes was exceptional, or so it often seemed: the workmen renovating the hotel in which I stayed began work at 7 a.m., but one official I visited assured me there was no point in arriving at the Ministry before 10 a.m. since no one would be present.

Nor has Denmark been able to escape the general economic depression within which all of us in the West are currently enmeshed. According to the OECD (1983), Denmark has been suffering from a 'deterioration of the public sector financial position'. Between 1978 and 1982 Denmark's general government financial position shifted from virtual balance to a deficit equivalent to nine per cent of GDP, one of the fastest declines in the OECD area.

'With the slower growth of the tax base, the rise in government revenue has decelerated while expenditures on unemployment benefits and the various employment support schemes have increased sharply, more than offsetting efforts to reduce and restructure spending in more traditional areas' (OECD 1983).

Denmark has youth unemployment and it has falling rolls. Teacher redundancy has begun to rear its head. The 'guest worker' problem is a growing concern. Between 1973 and 1982 the number of persons dependent on incomes from the public sector rose by almost 900,000, while private sector employment fell by 200,000. Denmark has a tradition of coalition governments, with a recent swing towards right-wing domination and a concern with curbing government spending. In many respects Denmark and Britain share similar problems and experiences - and not merely an interest in North Sea fishing.

DIFFERENCES

Nonetheless, while one may acknowledge that there are links and shared concerns with the Danes, for the purposes of the present exercise it is perhaps more useful to stress the differences. All educational systems reflect the prevailing social, political and economic attitudes and values, and transference of distinctive features from one system to another is notoriously difficult to bring about without major modifications which, in the end, often become metamorphoses. One has only to point to our concerns in the past decade to move towards North American concepts of negotiated learning, towards modular course structures and the establishment of a credit-transfer system: all fit uneasily into our inherited institutions. I am therefore hardly expectant that the features of the Danish system which are described in the following pages will (or could) emerge intact in our own system in the next few years. Rather, I have chosen to stress the differences in Danish practice for another reason: that the major benefits from comparative studies, it seems to me, lie in challenging our own assumptions and in coming to realise, yet again, how fully our own practices spring from our own culture.

What have proved to me to be so consistently interesting and valuable in exploring the Danish system are, therefore, precisely those ways and means where it differs from our own practice, and, by contrast, raises questions about long-cherished convictions. Since the end of the Second War, the coexistence of private/public sector institutions has been a continuing focus for debate in Britain - whether the two can coexist without detriment to the latter, whether the state is right in its indirect subsidy to the former. In Denmark the government will pay up to 85 per cent of the costs of running a private school, which, at primary school level, can be started with as few as 15 pupils. Our solution for occupying unemployed young people for whom traditional courses are inappropriate has been to develop programmes which increase work experience and decrease classroom learning. The Danes have sought to promote more 'theoretical' learning and to decrease work experience. As we are exploring the possibility of two-year higher education qualifications, the Danes retain a system where first degrees take a minimum of five/six years to complete on a normal level, but in practice frequently require two/three additional years. And so on. The Danish experience emphasises the essentially political/Political nature of educational activity and stresses the ways in which teaching and learning espouse the underlying cultural values and assumptions.

The following pages, therefore, emphasise the differences between Danish and British education. In so doing they also reflect the nature of my own experience in Denmark: repeated surprise and pleasure at discovering the unfamiliar, and a subsequent concern to question my own assumptions and those of the system in which I work.

II General features of the Danish education system

To a British visitor, a list of the most striking general features of the Danish system is likely to involve the following:

1. CENTRAL CONTROL

Because Denmark is a relatively small country, both in size and population, a high degree of centralisation has evolved. The general aims of most courses of both education and training are determined by the relevant ministry, usually the Ministry of Education (Danish Ministry 1983a). At higher levels of the system, central control is frequently very direct, e.g. at the upper secondary level, the Ministry of Education issues curriculum regulations. The Curriculum Regulations of the Gymnasium informs the teacher that:

'...the term 'pages' will be understood to mean 'standard pages'. Unless otherwise stated, a 'standard' page of prose will consist of 1300 letters, and a 'standard' page of poetry of 30 verse lines.'

and subsequently, for the information of English literature teachers, that:

'About 225 pages of prose of varying degrees of difficulty is studied intensively ... At least 350 pages are studied extensively, preferably representing genres of literature from a recent period. Subject matter from newspapers and periodicals must be included ... The intensively studied material may be reduced to 200 pages or increased to 250 pages, provided that the extensively studied material is extended or reduced correspondingly. In the syllabus offered for examination, two pages of intensively studied material corresponds to five pages of extensively studied material.'

Moreover, the teacher is instructed that:

'When school opens, the teacher should either draw up a working plan for the autumn term in co-operation with the students, or make such a plan known to them. As regards the later phases of instruction, the general rule is that these are planned jointly by the teacher and the students. The teacher and the students should discuss the instruction regularly ... The examination syllabus to be offered should be selected in consultation with the students.'

Thus, although responsibility for the education sector in Denmark is shared among the state, the counties, the municipalities (local authorities) and private individuals and institutions, at institutional level, particularly in the upper reaches of the system, there is frequently direct contact with the Ministry in a way which would be considered extraordinary, for example, between a local school and the Department of Education and Science in Britain.

It must not be assumed however that all areas of teaching activity are rigorously controlled. Although it is obligatory for schools to offer certain prescribed compulsory and non-compulsory subjects, there are others which the school may offer. At the equivalent of our 'A' levels, teachers set and mark their own examinations, relying on inter-school moderation for standardisation purposes, a procedure comparable to that employed in British higher education.

2. CLIENT CONTROL

The regulation quoted above which requires teachers to devise an examination syllabus in consultation with the students seems to me to reflect the greater reliance put upon learner-centredness in the Danish system. The kinds of sifting/sorting operations which have featured so prominently in the British system - traditionally at 11+, 15+, both later modified, 16+, 18+ and 21+ - are less evident in the Danish approach. Danish law does not allow marks to be given to pupils in their first seven years of compulsory schooling (which begins at age seven), so that comparisons are discouraged. Schools are, however, required to inform pupils and parents at least twice each year of the pupils' progress. Pupils in the lower secondary school remain together as a class throughout their entire school career. The final decisions as to which courses a pupil is to follow are made by parents, after consultation with the pupil and the school; the decision as to whether to enter for subsequent examinations is left to the pupils; and there are no pass marks.

In all post-compulsory courses - including vocational training and university education - entry is available to all applicants who have reached appropriate levels of competence in prescribed subjects. Where the number of applicants exceeds the places available, recourse is made to a lottery: the idea of interviewing

for course selection aroused incredulity among the Danes to whom I explained our practice in this regard. In primary and lower secondary schools, pupils have a right, but not a duty, to set up a pupils' council; at upper secondary school a school council must be established. It will consist of the headmaster, one or more representatives of the county council, the teachers, the parents, the students and other staff employed at the school. The council is expected to approve the timetable and to have a say in the distribution of the school budget. A ministry official to whom I spoke saw parents as the major evaluators of the system and suggested that the main reason why teachers were eager to develop their professional competence was to avoid the criticism of parents, who were more likely than heads to voice objections.

3. OPEN ACCESS

The lottery system referred to above is one means by which general access to education is made available, but high participation levels in the post-compulsory sector are encouraged by a number of other devices. Education at primary, secondary and tertiary levels is free of charge, and at primary/secondary levels so, too, are textbooks, teaching aids and materials. A loan system available to learners between 18 and 23 is intended to make access more widely available. Loans are repaid when the ex-student gets a job, at which point the payments also include interest at the current rate on the unpaid sum. As will become apparent in the later discussion of vocational preparation, entry to main skill/craft areas is dependent on the successful completion of fairly long training programmes. There are frequent opportunities for adults to acquire the qualifications needed for entry into higher education. Since 1977 all counties and the municipalities of Copenhagen and Frederiksberg have been required to establish single-subject courses for adults wishing to take one or more of the leaving examinations they may previously have missed.

4. THE TEACHING PROFESSION

Conditions of service for teachers in Britain are most fully defined in FE colleges where there are established limits for contact time. In Denmark, even more precisely defined conditions are laid down throughout the whole of the service. The number of hours of teaching undertaken is dependent on the academic level at which the work is being done, with less teaching to be done at the higher levels; and by teaching is meant not merely class contact time, but preparation as well, with more preparation time per class contact hour allowed for some subjects than others. Thus the upper secondary school head whom I interviewed was required by his contract to do seven hours of teaching, but spent only four in the classroom and three in preparation. Teachers are expected to be in school only when they are timetabled to meet a class or attend a meeting. Teachers are paid extra for taking the classes of absent colleagues, but are not expected to do so if they have no subject competence in the area. Even among teachers of fairly young children, the notion of extra-curricular duties does not arise:

where teachers choose to run clubs or take additional sports, they are paid extra. As one teacher put it, 'We do nothing for free in Denmark'.

The notion of social hierarchy, which is so fundamental a feature of British society and British educational establishments, features far less prominently in Denmark. In any given institution almost the whole of the teaching staff will be paid on the same salary scale, with bi-annual increments and actual salary dependent on teaching experience. In one vocational school I visited, the equivalent to a head of department was on a higher salary scale but actually received less than many of his non-head colleagues, since they were able to earn overtime and additional payments while he was not. In his case, the equivalent headship was viewed as a preliminary to retirement and an opportunity to put up the salary base on which his pension would be calculated. In most instances, where teachers undertake regular additional duties, they are compensated by a reduction in their teaching hours. Thus, in actual fact, wage differentials are less wide than in Britain, and the organisational hierarchy is much shallower.

In turn, the absence of the kind of gulf which exists in Britain between the LI and the principal was visible in other social arrangements. Teachers and learners (even very young children) were on first name terms. Everyone dressed informally. I found a teacher and his pupils smoking together in a motor vehicle classroom. I could find little evidence of discipline problems; both young people and teachers seemed to treat one another with mutual respect. On the other hand, the obvious reason why the actual teaching areas were so scrupulously clean was that all such areas were kept locked and students were not permitted in without a supervising teacher: taking me on a tour of the building inevitably necessitated my host having to collect a set of keys. In the lower secondary school pupils were expected to bring their own lunches; in the upper secondary/vocational schools, canteens were available. In all schools the pupil/student had access to a designated social area. Graffiti, which figure so prominently in so many of our local FE/tech colleges, were almost non-existent. Never have I seen so many running metres of pure white tiled walls without a mark on them.

Teachers in Denmark appeared to be there to teach rather than to participate in the many activities which in Britain seem to surround formal learning. British teachers might well find their Danish counterparts lacking in vocational commitment, but the Danish teacher might also be seen as more professional committedly. The teachers I met all assumed that they and their colleagues were inevitably self-motoring and self-motivating. No one I spoke to saw in-service training as a problem. I was repeatedly assured that only a tiny minority of teachers declined to go on external courses and programmes. As in Britain there was a shortage of money, but teachers appeared to assume that they would be required to continue to develop themselves professionally. An upper secondary teacher told me that she had attended a four-day course on technological development in shipyards and had been studying the

effects of new technology on the loss of skilled jobs, which she saw as appropriate in-service development in her own field, economics. A motor vehicle lecturer said that he and his colleagues had made summer trips abroad to look at developments in foreign automobile manufacturing.

Another striking feature of the Danish teaching profession was the near absence of career mobility. Only principals seemed to have taught in another institution, and then not inevitably. With the absence of the graded-post system we operate, it was fairly apparent that there was little interest in the kind of college-hopping which anyone hoping to go from L1 to HoD might anticipate. The ministry official I met on my first working day in Denmark assured me that it was usual for people to be born, grow up, be educated, go to work, marry, have a family, retire and die in the same town or area: 25 years after he had left school, his own daughter began her education with many of the same teachers he had known. Generally speaking, such promotion as existed would be expected to be made internally, as had been the case with the inspectors (heads) I met in the vocational schools, and with the study lecturer in the upper secondary school. The same sense of continuity seemed to be reflected in the teaching arrangements: it was an unwritten rule that teachers moved up with their classes, staying with the same group over the years and seeing them through from entry to examination. The notion that a change of teacher might prove intellectually stimulating for the learner was regarded, rather, as an abrogation of responsibility.

5. MANAGEMENT TRAINING

With a system which is so centrally organised, in which the details of operational management are so specifically elaborated and in which the self-motivating professional is seen as the norm rather than the exception, it is hardly surprising that the training of educational managers is virtually non-existent. Managerial autonomy and institutional individuality, which we value so highly in our system, are of no apparent importance to the Danes, for which reason there is little interest in training teachers to take on responsibilities which are seen as primarily administrative in nature. In the teacher-training establishment which I visited, it was made clear that nothing comparable to the Further Education Staff College existed in Denmark: 'There is no ladder in Denmark, and nowhere to climb.' Interested teachers could attend business-manager courses, but the general pattern seemed to be that educational administrators would expect to pick up the skills required to discharge their responsibilities without special training, and any uncertainties about how to interpret the regulations could be resolved by reference to the Ministry.

III The Danish school system

Education is compulsory in Denmark for children between the ages of seven and 16 years. Optional pre-school classes are available for children of five or six years of age (Danish Ministry 1983a). The general aims of most courses of education and training are determined by the relevant ministry, usually the Ministry of Education.

1. PRE-SCHOOL EDUCATION

Children under the age of seven may attend day nurseries (up to the age of three), kindergartens (three to seven), and pre-school classes (five to seven). The latter are available to children in the year of their sixth birthday; since 1980-81 their availability has been a requirement for all municipalities. In 1980, about 86 per cent of all children of the requisite age attended pre-school classes: the classes are state subsidised, but parents are required to pay up to 35 per cent of the costs.

2. PRIMARY AND LOWER SECONDARY EDUCATION: THE FOLKESKOLE

In principle, the Folkeskole (for pupils seven to 16) is comprehensive and pupils remain together in a class throughout the entire nine years of their compulsory education, although some optional courses are available in the last three years. In 1980-81 there were 2,343 schools providing primary and lower secondary education with just over 783,000 pupils, representing approximately 93 per cent of the relevant population. The remainder could attend a variety of private schools in which up to 85 per cent of the cost would be met by the state. In the Folkeskole, according to the Education Act, the curriculum includes:

- 2.1 Compulsory subjects which individual schools must offer: from forms 1 to 10, at various times, these will include Danish, arithmetic/mathematics, physical education and sport, Christian studies, creative art, music, history, geography, biology, needlework, woodwork, English, home economics, physics, chemistry and contemporary studies. The latter, compulsory in the 8th, 9th and 10th forms, is a new subject intended to give pupils insight into some of 'the essential local, national and global problems of our time'.

2.2. Compulsory subjects which the individual school may offer: these include needlework, woodwork, home economics, creative art and music, all of which are in 2.1. above, but under this guise may also appear in the form years when they are not legally required. Thus, home economics must be taught in the 6th form, but may also be taught in the 1st to 5th and 7th forms.

2.3 Non-compulsory subjects which the individual school must offer: German in the 7th to the 10th forms, and additionally in the 10th form arithmetic/mathematics, Christian studies/religious studies, physics, chemistry and French.

2.4 Non-compulsory subjects which the individual school may offer: all of these occur in the 8th to the 10th forms and are of two sorts.

2.4.1 Subjects which were previously but are not now compulsory: creative art, music, geography, biology, needlework, woodwork, home economics and (in the 10th form only) history and Latin.

2.4.2 'New' subjects: typing, photography, drama, film, motor knowledge, electronics, child care and vocational studies. The latter is intended to enable pupils to acquire knowledge and experience of working life and society in general and is defined as 'the knowledge of the range of educational and employment opportunities available and of the conditions prevailing in working life' and includes visits to and periods of work experience in firms and institutions.

Every school must work out an educational plan establishing the number of lessons in each subject, their distribution on the timetable, and the content of the curriculum; the educational plan must then be approved by the municipal council. The Ministry of Education issues 'guidelines to the curriculum, and teaching guides for the individual subjects', but these are not binding. Teaching methods are at the discretion of individual teachers. In addition, the Folkeskole employs 'a system which is both traditionally and uniquely Danish':

'This is the so-called 'class teacher system'. The class teacher, often the Danish teacher, has the social responsibility for the class as a whole and acts as a link between home and school. The class teacher deals with any educational and social problems arising in the class and is also responsible for the administrative affairs of the class. For this purpose, a special weekly lesson - klassens time - free class discussion (period) - is included in the timetable, during which problems can be discussed, parties planned and outings arranged. This lesson may also be used

for instruction in such compulsory topics as road safety, sex education, health education, educational and vocational guidance, etc.' (Danish Ministry of Education 1983)

Since the 1975 Act on the Folkeskole there has been no overall examination for Folkeskole pupils, but leaving examinations are taken on a single-subject basis. There are only two examination levels, and in the large majority of subjects only one. Pupils themselves decide whether they want to present themselves for examination in particular subjects. There is no pass mark. Leaving examinations are available in: at the end of the 8th, 9th and 10th forms, creative art, woodwork, home economics, and typing; at the end of the 9th and 10th forms, Danish, arithmetic/mathematics, English, physics/chemistry and German; at the end of the 10th form only, Latin and French. Advanced leaving examinations, which can be taken only at the end of the 10th form, are available in Danish, arithmetic/mathematics, English, physics/chemistry and German.

As indicated earlier, under present law, marks are not given in the 1st to the 7th forms, but schools are required to inform pupils and parents of pupil progress at least once a year. In the 8th, 9th and 10th forms, marks are given in those subjects in which leaving examinations may be taken. Upon leaving school all pupils receive a leaving certificate indicating subjects taken, the level, the latest marks for the year's work and examination results.

Compulsory education is normally over after the 9th form of Folkeskole but at the latest on the 31st July in the year of the pupil's 17th birthday. At the parents' request, special arrangements can be made for pupils to enter trainee service or work earlier, but only after at least seven years of education. In such arrangements the school is required to offer advice and guidance regarding opportunities for further education and the pupil can choose to return to school. All pupils who leave the Folkeskole after the 9th form have a right to a leaving certificate. It is also possible to complete compulsory education after seven years by participating in full time education at a municipal youth school or a continuation school.

3. EDUCATION AT UPPER SECONDARY LEVEL

At this level, education traditionally prepares students for entry to higher education and offers the nearest equivalent to what we would call 'A' level courses. Students who have completed the 9th or 10th forms of the Folkeskole can be admitted to a Gymnasium, offering three-year courses, on the basis of:

'... a statement issued by their earlier school to the effect that they are 'qualified' or 'perhaps qualified' for studies at this level. Depending on their choice of line, a further requirement is that pupils have passed the Leaving Examination of the Folkeskole in certain subjects with a

satisfactory result and have followed at least the basic course in certain other subjects.' (Danish Ministry of Education 1983)

'Line' (above) refers to one of two possible routes - languages or mathematics - chosen in the 1st year at the Gymnasium, but with the possibility of further division in the 2nd and 3rd years into as many as seven different branches of study plus experimental branches: modern languages; music and languages; social studies and languages; classical languages; mathematics and physics; social studies and mathematics; natural sciences and mathematics.

The three-year Gymnasium course leads to the Upper Secondary School Leaving Examination (Studentereksamen) and this route has proved increasingly attractive to young people. In the two decades between 1980 and 1979/80, Gymnasium course enrolments rose to nearly three-and-a-half times their earlier level. Additionally, in 1979/80, approximately one in three young people continuing into post-compulsory education went into general education, with the other two moving into vocational education/training. The primary difficulty occasioned by this split is that the latter are prepared for jobs, while the former are prepared for higher education where there are insufficient places available to meet client demand. Since the middle '70s entry to further/higher education (1) has been regulated by a numerus clausus arrangement. (Further/higher education is defined as including university studies, courses at specialised institutions (e.g. Royal Danish School of Pharmacy, dental colleges, Royal Veterinary and Agricultural University, etc.), engineering colleges and teacher training colleges.) Nonetheless, with or without adequate FE/HE places, the Gymnasium route has grown in popularity in recent years, partly because it represents unrestricted entry (whereas vocational education does not: see Section IV) and partly because Gymnasia are more extensively distributed geographically than vocational schools.

Apart from the traditional Gymnasium course leading to the Upper Secondary School Leaving Examination, there are two additional routes available to would-be Danish students:

- 3.1 The Higher Preparatory Examination (HF): This was introduced in 1967 and is not a form of schooling (like the Folkeskole and the Gymnasium) but an examination. It can be sat by anyone over the age of 18. Because many individuals would be unable to pass such an examination without instruction, two-year courses are available at Gymnasia and teacher training colleges. The examination is taken on a single-subject basis allowing the candidate to 'build up' his examination by passing one subject (or even part of a subject) at a time, and in some instances (via evening-school courses) to assemble his passes over a three or four year period.

3.2. Another possibility is the Higher Commercial Examination (HH), comparable to the Upper Secondary School Leaving Examination, but more vocationally oriented.

IV The Danish vocational education and training system

The arrangements discussed in the previous section represent the Danish version of what we would see as school provision from nursery/infant to sixth form level with local FE facilities for mature students wishing to undertake preparation for examinations also taken by school pupils. There are many differences between the two systems, as discussed, but the dissimilarities are far less extreme than those which separate provision for vocational education/training in Denmark and Britain. As will become apparent, what the Danish vocational education system offers is a far more integrated and co-ordinated national system for meeting the needs of young people, needs which are fairly similar to those encountered in Britain.

1. BACKGROUND

Vocational education in Denmark was traditionally based primarily on three to four years' training which involved an apprenticeship contract between employer and apprentice. The apprentice learned his trade by participating in day-to-day work supplemented by evening classes in a number of subjects such as Danish, arithmetic and draftsmanship. In 1956 the apprenticeship system was reorganised to include day-release arrangements (in place of evening classes), increased participation from national trade committees composed of equal numbers of employer organisation/trade union representatives, and a broader curriculum involving practical subjects. Apprenticeship numbers increased until the latter half of the 1960s when they began to drop, a change explained by criticism of the system itself, a fall in the birth rate and a growing range of educational alternatives. In June 1967 the Ministry of Education asked a committee to re-evaluate the apprenticeship system. A report submitted in February 1971 made the following observations:

- 1.1 The choice of trade was made too early in life.
- 1.2 There were no transfer arrangements among apprenticeship schemes or other forms of education/training.
- 1.3 The availability of work was dependent on the employer, resulting in insufficient security for later employment.

1.4. The practical training in employment and the education at vocational schools were not co-ordinated.

1.5 With increasing industrial and commercial specialisation, it was often difficult to satisfy the requirements for all-round training.

1.6 The apprenticeship work undertaken at vocational schools involved too few general subjects.

The committee recommended a new type of vocational education and training to start with a full year of day-school with an introduction to a whole family of trades, to include student guidance in the definitive choice of trade and the inclusion of more general education. The new approach was introduced as an experiment in a few schools, and in 1977 an act was passed which confirmed the new approach and allowed for expanded provision. However, apprenticeship training was not stopped, so there are now two parallel systems: apprenticeship training and the basic vocational education (EFG) courses). The following table shows how the two systems have progressed over more than 40 years:

Table 1

Danish Vocational Training Provision 1939-1981

Year	Intake basic vocational education students	Intake of apprentices		
		Commerce & office	Crafts & Industry	Apprentices total
1939	-	3,700	7,200	10,900
1945	-	4,300	8,400	12,700
1950	-	6,400	12,500	18,900
1955	-	8,000	13,000	21,000
1960	-	12,900	20,200	31,100
1965	-	16,200	21,700	37,400
1970	200	11,200	16,800	28,000
1975	6,400	5,500	9,500	15,000
1976	9,000	8,200	12,800	21,000
1977	13,000	7,800	12,500	20,300
1978	26,000	7,900	13,000	21,500
1979	28,000	4,400	14,600	19,000
1980	33,000	2,600	12,100	14,700
1981	35,000	2,400	11,700	14,100

Source: Danish Ministry of Education 1983

2. APPRENTICESHIP TRAINING (L)

(The 'L' is the Danish way of designating the apprentice. In vocational schools, L classes are therefore apprentice classes.)

Apprenticeship training now lasts from two to four years. In order to enter, the would-be apprentice requires nine years of compulsory schooling. Training takes place in a firm and at school (technical school, commercial school, or other specialised school) alternatively, with a fixed number of weeks of instruction per year via day classes. Upon completion of training, the apprentice is awarded a certificate after having passed his journeyman's test.

As is apparent in Table 1 above, apprenticeship training has been in a state of general decline since the mid-'60s: the latest recruitment level represents less than 40 per cent of peak figures. As is explained under 3.2. below, some activities are available under both system (e.g. electrician, bricklayer, waiter, cook, milliner, etc.); a limited number under apprenticeship schemes only (e.g. metal founder, steel engraver, gardener, orthopedic shoemaker, sailmaker, chimney sweep, etc.) for fairly obvious reasons; and a significant number possible only under EFG schemes and not as a form of apprenticeship training (the majority of graphic industries, agriculture, horticulture and forestry trades, etc.). The general movement is away from apprenticeship towards the more formally organised and generally based EFG scheme described below.

3. BASIC VOCATIONAL EDUCATION (EFG)

This form of training requires nine years of compulsory schooling and lasts between three and five years. Vocational education in Denmark is organised into eight main fields (described below). Each field involves two parts: a basic year as Part I and between two and four additional years as Part II.

3.1 Part I: The Basic Year. This year is spent at vocationally oriented schools (technical schools, commercial schools or other specialised schools) and instruction is divided into three subject areas:

3.1.1 Special subjects: these include practical training in school workshops and lessons in vocational theory in the chosen educational field.

3.1.2 Common core subjects: these are subjects studied by all students: e.g. Danish, foreign languages, sports, mathematics, social studies and management studies (the commercial schools do not distinguish between special subjects and common core subjects).

3.1.3 **Optional subjects:** these are chosen by the students and the number of subjects/disciplines varies from one school to another. Possible subjects are creative art, photography, foreign languages, sports, mathematics, psychology.

3.1.4 In five of the eight fields described below, the Basic Year is divided into: 60 per cent on special subjects, 30 per cent on compulsory common core subjects, and 10 per cent on optional subjects. The exceptions are:

3.1.4.1 Commerce, clerical trades and public administration, where during all 40 weeks students take part in the same compulsory instruction within their main field of interest, but with the provision for choosing two optional subjects during the last 20 weeks.

3.1.4.2 Iron and metal industries, where 75 per cent is spent on special subjects, 15 per cent on compulsory common core and 10 per cent on optional subjects. (I was led to believe that this arrangement followed from industrial resistance but that there were expectations of a reduction in the time spent on the special subjects component.)

3.1.4.3 Service trades, where 43 per cent of the work involves special subjects, 30 per cent compulsory common core subjects, 10 per cent optional subjects, and 17 per cent compulsory special electives.

3.1.5 Between 14 and 30 weeks is generally spent on joint classes. There are opportunities for students to change their fields during the first part of the Basic Year.

3.2 **Part II:** After completing the basic course, one of a number of different second part courses can be selected, each lasting an additional two to four years. Training takes place in a firm and at school alternately. It is possible to complete the training with a vocational test in some subjects. A diploma is issued on completion of training. There are eight general fields in which Part II can be taken and each involves a large number of particular trades. In the following lists, EFG refers to the present scheme and L to apprenticeships.

3.2.1 **Construction industry:** available EFG and L: paviour, electrician, bricklayer, housepainter, sign writer, coach painter, glazier, carpenter, cabinetmaker, woodworking machinest/wood turner, joiner, mason; available EFG only: industrial electrician, gas fitter and plumber, plumber; available L only: building plumber.

3.2.2 **Graphic industries:** available EFG and L: typographical technician, printing technician, bookbinder; available EFG only: specialist photographer, reproduction photographer, reproduction copying clerk, offset printer, serigrapher.

3.2.3 **Commerce, clerical trades and public administration:** general courses available as EFG and L: daily running of shop, wholesale trade courses; and as EFG only, administrative systems. Thereafter divided into:

3.2.3.1 **Retailing:** as EFG and L: books, photographic goods, stationery, hardware, sports and camping goods, gold and silverware, radio and TV, groceries, delicatessen, paint and wallpaper, drysaltery, flowers, soaps and perfumes, shoes, drapery, furniture, electrical supplies, toys and hobby articles, motor cars, wine and tobacco; as EFG only: decorations.

3.2.3.2 **Wholesaling:** as EFG and L: foodstuffs, groceries, drapery, timber, tools and machines, iron and steel products, hardware, motor cars and spare parts, agricultural machines.

3.2.3.3 **Clerical training:** as EFG and L: all-round office work; as EFG only: correspondence, accounting, EDP, tourist trade, banks, savings banks, insurance, municipal administration, medical secretary, forwarding, shipbroker's work, two-year EDP assistant's work.

3.2.4 **Iron and metal industries:** available as EFG and L: automobile mechanic, lorry mechanic, body mechanic, motorcycle mechanic, business machine mechanic, radio mechanic, electrical engineer, electronics mechanic; available as EFG only: machine-tool fitter, toolmaker cut/punch, ship's fitter, locksmith, plate and construction smith, building and agricultural smith, industrial pipesmith, shipbuilder, farm machine mechanic, plumber/pipesmith, welder, coachsmith, precision mechanic, business machine mechanic, moped mechanic, aircraft mechanic, tractor mechanic, control equipment mechanic, electrician, industrial electrician; available only as L: moulder, bench worker, turner, cutter, brazier, metal printer, orthopedist mechanic, armourer, copper smith, farrier, ship building worker, cooling fitter, metal founder steel engraver, piston engraver, iron and metal grinder, automobile electrician.

3.2.5 **Agriculture, horticulture and forestry:** available only as EFG: landscape gardener, outdoor gardener, fruit and berry grower, nursery gardener, greenhouse gardener, excavator driver, animal farmer, forester; available only as L, gardener.

3.2.6 **Transport:** all available only as EFG: crane operator (mobile cranes); storeman and transport worker, timber and building materials; storeman and transport worker, plumbing and steel trades; storeman and transport worker, heavy goods sector; railway men/employee (DSB, The Danish Railways); furniture remover; long-distance lorry driver; salvage corps man.

3.2.7 **Food industries:** available as EFG and L: waiter, cook, baker, confectioner, butcher in shop, dairyman, pork butcher, cattle butcher, gut cleaner, sausage maker; available as EFG only: cook's assistant, sandwich maid, canteen assistant, kitchen maid, countermaid/girl; available only as L: butcher (private shopowner), butcher (correspondence school), pork butcher (bacon production), industrial sausage maker.

3.2.8 **Service trades:** available as EFG and L: milliner, furrier, furriery sewer, hairdresser, dental technician, potter; available only as EFG: tailor, industrial furrier, industrial furriery sewer, car upholsterer, curtain decorator, shoemaker, optician, watchmaker, glass tube blower; available only as L: closer, paperhanger, industrial paperhanger, orthopedic shoemaker, sailmaker, chimney sweep, overglaze painter.

3.3 **Distinguishing features of the Danish system.** Merely reading through the above lists - tedious though it may initially seem - has a fascination which may not at first be evident; in that, compared to British practice, the lists point to fundamental differences in the assumptions about how society ought to be organised.

3.3.1 **Professionalism.** The idea that any individual needs to spend a minimum of **three years** (including one in full time education) learning how to sell books, groceries, toys or tobacco, or in becoming a waiter, sausage-maker/girl or gut cleaner, may well strike many of us as extravagant if not eccentric. In a society in which only a decade has passed since most (although not yet all) schoolteachers are required to undergo training, the notion of extended training for service in retail/service industries may well seem exceptional. In Denmark it is not. In Britain we are fortunate if our multi-nationals delay opening for 20 to 45 minutes one day per week to train staff: the spirit of amateurism still reigns unchallenged in most areas of public activity. Again, in Denmark, the reverse is true, which perhaps explains why, in a Copenhagen job centre, I found an advertisement for a Danish open-sandwich maker offering approximately £800 per month. As the job-centre worker explained, such a person would have undergone a three-year training programme. This perhaps also explains the excellence of Danish open-sandwiches.

3.3.2 Competition for jobs. Ministry officials to whom I talked repeatedly stressed the importance of formal education/training in obtaining jobs: the greater the length and the higher the level of training, the greater the statistical likelihood of obtaining employment. The Danish approach (discussed above and below) is therefore to encourage the unskilled and untrained worker to return to or begin a formal training scheme; hence, too, a movement away from uncertificated work experience towards the attainment of formal qualifications based on a sound theoretical understanding of the activity involved.

3.3.3 A national system. Unlike our own system - fragmented, varied and diverse, to meet what are described as 'local needs' - the Danish system is a genuine system, nationally organised, rational and consistent in its approach to a degree which we might well find strange (if not offensive), since deviation from a (imagined?) national norm is so frequently regarded as a sign of superiority, at least in our educational press. The essential and general features of the EFG system may be described as follows:

3.3.3.1 There are two kinds of vocational school: commercial schools to deal with 3.2.3 above, and technical schools to provide part or all of the training described in 3.2.1, 3.2.2, and 3.2.4 to 3.2.8 above.

3.3.3.2 At present, something like 86,000 people emerge each year from the Danish school system: approximately 40 per cent go to Gymnasia, and approximately 20,000 each (23 per cent) go to commercial and to technical schools.

3.3.3.3 Where applicant demand exceeds the number of available places, qualified applicants enter a national lottery organised by the Ministry of Education: a trained legal staff is available to deal with complaints from the unsuccessful. In the fields of service and graphic industries, approximately 10 per cent of available places are allocated to deal with individuals whose family business is in a particular field but who have failed to gain training after several tries in the lottery, and to help to redress the balance of deficiencies in geographical provision.

3.3.3.4 Before commencing Part II of the EFG programme, students require an employer with whom they can be associated during their training which is grounded in practical work experience, but the onus for acquiring an employer rests legally with the student. In commercial and technical

schools teachers may provide unofficial assistance - cutting out newspaper advertisements for Part II students, keeping an up-to-date directory of 'placed' students, exhorting, urging and cajoling - but ultimately the student is responsible for organising his own training.

3.3.3.5 Nationally, there are about 55 technical schools and approximately the same number of commercial schools. Agricultural schools are run by the Ministry of Agriculture.

3.3.3.6 If students miss out on the lottery they have an alternative way into the system: by finding an employer and working for one year, they can gain entry to Part II with exemption from Part I.

3.3.3.7 'Split' training involving more than one employer has to be approved by committee.

3.3.3.8 The curricula for EFG training is planned nationally at central level and involves a number of ministries (primarily the Ministries of Education, Labour, the Interior and Social Affairs), representatives of labour and management, and various official and private bodies. However, co-operation goes beyond determining the content of training courses: the technical and commercial schools responsible for the theoretical part of the training are, although state-subsidised, self-governing institutions administered by a board whose members are mainly appointed by local employers' and employees' organisations.

4. THE TEACHING PROFESSION

Reference has already been made to the general conditions (qv. above) within which teachers perform their duties. One might also note the following.

4.1 Teacher training. As in British colleges of FE, Danish commercial/technical schools employ both teachers with a vocational background (e.g. plumbers, hairdressers, etc.) and teachers with an academic background (e.g. qualified in subjects such as languages or mathematics) who might be graduates. Vocational school teachers are trained after they obtain jobs. They are expected to complete 40 three-week modules within their first two years of teaching. The training involves both classroom and practical work. This initial training is carried out by a national centre (the Statens Erhvervspaedagogiske Laereruddannelse) and four regional centres. Specialised courses are sometimes run in other locations. Over all, something like 30 FT staff are

involved in the teacher training programme across the country, assisted by part time specialists from industry, schools and the university.

- 4.2 In-service training. Although I could find no evidence of general concern about unwillingness to undertake in-service work, I did detect indications of some problems familiar to us from the British scene: resource constraints which have limited the extent to which teachers can take in-service opportunities and a growing awareness of the need for vocational teachers to update their industrial/commercial experience in order to keep abreast of developments.

5. OPERATIONAL DIFFICULTIES

As in other countries, the Danes have encountered a number of fundamental problems in establishing vocational training programmes, most of which centre on the mismatch between supply and demand. The years 1982 to 1984 involve particularly large school-leaving groups and youth unemployment(qv. below), as in Britain, is a political minefield. There is therefore the dilemma of whether the Danes should base vocational training on the needs of the business sector or on those of young people, leaving the market to act as a control device. The 'solution' has been something of a compromise, with some financial assistance given to employers to encourage them to take on a larger number of young trainees, but an overall inability to meet young people's expectations. The Danish Ministry of Education (1982a) tells us that by March 1982:

'...approximately 5,000 young people were still looking for a traineeship in spite of the extensive campaign, especially during the last year or so, to find more places for on-the-job training.'

Although there has been a recognition that, 'All young people should have at least four offers of vocational education, apart from apprenticeship training, within approximately one hour's travelling time,' the goal has not always been attained. It is also apparent that geographic constraints play some part in the young person's vocational training opportunities.

The mismatch between supply and demand in many areas is illustrated by Table 2.

Table 2

Supply and demand for vocational training places in 1982

Main occupation area	Capacity	Number of applicants indicating this as their first choice
Iron & metal industries	7,872	8,676
Construction industries	2,910	2,632
Food processing industries	2,016	4,226
Service trades	1,540	4,540
Graphic industries	544	1,307
Agriculture	432	544
Overland transport	336	546
Clerical trades	24,200	23,251
Total	39,650	45,722

Source: Danish Ministry of Education 1983

6. VOCATIONAL SCHOOLS

I visited three vocational schools in Denmark.

6.1 Slagelse Technical School is a large, purpose-built institution erected in the early 1970s. It has approximately 1500 students and 200 teachers (including FT and PT) covering five of the eight fields outlined above, plus community adult education. There are also seven inspectors (equivalent to our heads of department), each with a number of leaders (equivalent to section heads, but chosen by colleagues); nine student counsellors; a principal (selected by the Ministry of Education) and a vice principal (chosen by the inspectors). All of those with administrative/managerial/counselling functions are given remission from teaching to perform their duties.

6.2 Lyngby Technical School is a smaller, split-site establishment offering training only in the iron and metal industries field. In addition to the principal, two inspectors and four counsellors, there are nearly 60 teachers, and the school trains both EFG and L students. The work here centred on the traditional male preserves of metalwork and motor vehicle maintenance and was almost totally male dominated, except for office staff. I saw one female student in a workshop and was told that another had left, having found the physical demands too heavy.

6.3 Lyngby Commercial School, although adjacent to one of the Technical School buildings, is operated as a separate and independent establishment. Of the approximately 450 students, about 55 per cent are female. There is a principal, four inspectors, and 42 FT teachers.

6.4 Characteristic features of the Danish vocational school. The amount of time (one day each) I was able to spend at the above institutions was inevitably limited. I am clearly unable to affirm or deny on such limited experience the extent to which they can be described as typical. It is nonetheless worth noting that in the two Lyngby schools many members of staff considered themselves hard done by in that they had to occupy converted disused factory settings rather than purpose-built accommodation, and in the commercial school I was repeatedly assured that the next-door factory provided an unacceptable level of noise during the summer months. With the above caveats in mind I would suggest that, to a British visitor, the distinguishing features of these three schools might be characterised as follows (in comparison with comparable British institutions):

6.4.1 The schools displayed an exceptional level of physical resourcing: spacious, well appointed, superbly equipped and in virtually pristine condition. Students and teachers worked in excellent accommodation. Such a high level of cleanliness could not be attributed entirely to cleaning staff but must have reflected attitudes of the student body to care and respect for their environment.

6.4.2 The catering arrangements were remarkable, both for students and staff. I attended a lunch in the commercial school for a visiting team of moderator teachers who were supervising examination arrangements. The cuisine was excellent and for quality and presentation would challenge a good many British training restaurants (although the food, in the Danish style, was cold).

6.4.3 Teachers were well provided with storage space, staff rooms and work areas.

6.4.4 The exceptional cleanliness of the accommodation must be partly attributed to the tendency to lock all work areas and classrooms when a teacher is not present.

6.4.5 Perhaps because nothing comparable to Burnham arrangements exists in Denmark, the kind of quantitative data which one might expect many heads of department to carry in their heads (number of staff, student hours, student-staff ratios, proportion of part time staff, etc.) was exceptionally hard to come by, even from principals. Quantitative data which was available related to individual teacher hours: teachers were

expected to undertake 1012 lessons per year over a 40-42 week period, and inspectors kept weekly tally sheets for each member of staff.

6.4.6 What came across to me in all these institutions was a sense of carefully organised social order: a feeling for place and procedure, a sense of personal restraint, and an atmosphere of mutual respect among teachers and students.

6.4.7 All of the arrangements discussed above represent daytime provision. Adult education is offered under separate arrangements. There are evening schools (aftenskoler), extra-mural departments of the universities (folkeuniversitetsvirksomhed), and voluntary education arranged by private sponsors or by municipalities (the largest are the Workers' Educational Association and the Popular Educational Association). Adult vocational education is discussed in the next section.

V Other forms of vocational training

The system described in the previous chapter is intended primarily for the school leaver. However, vocational training requirements extend beyond the needs of those who are preparing to enter work via certification, and the following represent additional training arrangements available in Denmark to serve the needs of relatively different clients.

1. PERMANENT PROGRAMMES

1.1 There are arrangements for training semi-skilled workers which lead to paper qualifications which are generally (except in the case of metal workers) not comparable to those obtained via technical schools. There are five state and 18 self-governing schools, spread over a number of sites. To oversee these activities, at central level there is a training board with a chairman appointed by the crown, eight members from unions and 35 from employers; there are also special representatives of government (including the Ministry of Education) without voting rights. The board's task is to set up branch committees and to approve training plans. The training programmes are intended to allow trainees to enter and leave at suitable stages (from one to 10 weeks, but with three weeks as the norm). In independent arrangements, 85 per cent of net expenses is met by the government, with the remainder coming (five per cent each) from the municipality, the unions and the employers. State schools are fully funded by the government. Training facilities are also provided in a limited number of larger enterprises, with 85 per cent of costs paid by the government. Smaller local enterprises also have the possibility of arranging programmes. Residential accommodation is available in state schools.

1.2 Since 1965 there has been provision for retraining and upgrading skilled workers who already hold paper qualifications. Two to four week courses are provided. The main difference between the two permanent programmes is that this programme is not based on its own schools, but is run in technical schools, in schools provided for the programme outlined in 1.1. above, and in individual firms. National committees are responsible for determining the extent and nature of training needs, but local influence is less than in the other programme. In retraining programmes, the government provides 85 per cent of the costs. Trainees receive normal

unemployment grants, but if their wages were higher they can obtain up to 25 per cent more. About 30 trades (the largest of which include metal work, electricians, skilled office and shop personnel) are covered in this arrangement.

2. SPECIAL PROGRAMMES

2.1 Pre-vocational training is available for young people. When these arrangements started in 1972 the problem was not a lack of jobs but of motivation; now, however, this provision has become a central element in dealing with youth unemployment which is increasingly regarded as structural. Guidance has become a fundamental element of this programme, with the work divided into three phases:

2.1.1 Young people are given a broad introduction into different trades. There are 52 centres for these courses all over the country, with each centre covering trades relevant to the local community. This First Phase is intended to give young people practical experience and lasts from eight to 12 weeks.

2.1.2 The Second Phase, lasting four weeks, provides practical work in local firms, with some choice among different offers available in the area.

2.1.3 The Third Phase is centred on a counselling function with an attempt to follow up trainees and try to find them jobs or to provide skill improvement by further training and education (mainly at technical schools) and to get rid of the myths about technical schools (i.e. that the work is based only on theory and reading). Approximately 20 - 25 per cent go on to technical schools from this programme and the rest onto the labour market (with approximately one third 'resting').

2.1.4 Payment is provided on these programmes for between 14 and 16 weeks.

2.2. There are special retraining arrangements intended mainly for adults. These are run in schools, in technological institutes and in factories. Each programme is individually planned. Certain geographical areas (e.g. North Jutland) have been claimed as development areas. These courses are run at low numbers, with an overall takeup of about 500 persons per year.

2.3 There are special courses for long-term unemployed adults (with special programmes for women). The problem here is people who have lost contact with the labour market and the union, or - especially among women - have lost confidence in their employment prospects. The courses are very much like those described in 2.1 above, except that only the First and

Third Phases are provided, together occupying between six and nine weeks. These programmes are also provided in the five state and the 18 self-governed schools discussed in 2.1 above.

- 2.4 There are special courses for migrant workers who number somewhere between 70,000 and 75,000 and who derive from a wide range of countries (half are from Scandinavia and the EEC, with the rest from Turkey, Greece, Pakistan, and political refugees from Vietnam, Chile, Equador, Brazil, Argentina). For many years there has been a Danish policy of receiving a limited number of refugees. Such workers have problems which are familiar enough to us in Britain: difficulties in coping with the national language and in confronting discrimination among the indigenous population. The courses for migrant workers often provide either Danish language teaching on its own or offer courses integrating Danish with introductory courses in various trade.

3. ORGANISATION

The courses described in 1 and 2 above are organised via the Ministry of Labour. There is evidently some tension between that Ministry and the Ministry of Education (cf. the Manpower Services Commission/Department of Education and Science in Britain), and it is worth noting that the arrangements by which I was able to meet a Ministry of Labour representative were made by the Ministry of Education only after I had been alerted to the alternative arrangements by an individual working outside central government.

4. YOUTH UNEMPLOYMENT

Like other western countries, Denmark is currently suffering from the recession and from unemployment difficulties. The most likely period of unemployment is statistically between the ages of 18 to 25. There is a possibility of undertaking 18 months' military service, but only approximately 60 per cent actually do this (some voluntarily), and young people from socially disadvantaged groups are more likely to be unemployed. Nonetheless, with something like 80,000 people per year unemployed, there are only approximately 37,000 traineeships available, and there has been growing concern to combat youth unemployment through a wide range of measures which include:

- 4.1 Extraordinary traineeships and apprenticeships via subsidies to private employers, local and county authorities, and the state.
- 4.2 Employment projects: some started by local/county authorities, some employment schemes with 80 per cent of wages provided by the state, and other subsidies to employers to engage young people.

- 4.3 County authority courses within gymnasia and technical/commercial schools offering combinations of subjects from various forms of education with work programmes. Also provision for extra courses (usually of one-year's length) at commercial/technical schools.
- 4.4 Contact and information services for young people.
- 4.5 Inevitably, despite the exuberant production of government literature indicating the various ways in which youth unemployment is being redressed, there is little doubt that the Danes are experiencing problems similar to our own: the growth of structural unemployment; the demise/decline of the unskilled worker; the emerging/intensifying disadvantage of isolated social groups; and deep rooted concerns about potential social unrest.
- 4.6 At the time of my visit, much hope was being pinned on the Danish Government's announced intention of a 'youth guarantee' by the beginning of 1984, founded on the principle that every young person would be given an opportunity to undergo vocational training leading to a qualification. This would involve:
- 4.6.1 On-the-job or school-based training.
 - 4.6.2 The creation of new jobs, partly through a general work-creating economic policy and partly through a series of job-creating activities intended directly for young people, with particular concern to take into account the training and employment problems of young women.
 - 4.6.3 The introduction of basic training not confined to particular skill areas (EFG) and the introduction of EFG training in the social and health fields.
 - 4.6.4 Increased grants for firms which establish additional training places.
 - 4.6.5 Ensuring that the majority of vacancies in public construction and civil engineering projects are filled by young people.
- 4.7 Such measures, of course, are likely to ease problems for young people. What they cannot do on their own, however, is ease the plight of older unemployed workers. The women I interviewed in a Copenhagen job centre put the problem succinctly, 'Between 18 and 25 people are quite well off. At 25 troubles begin'.

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VI Reflections

So brief a visit as mine to Denmark in 1983 cannot result in anything approaching conclusions: I am only too aware of the limitations of my experience and of the complex nature of the scene which I surveyed. I learned a great deal, but I remained ignorant of much more.

Denmark was the first Scandinavian country I had visited. Scandinavian countries are so frequently held up to us as models of how democratic societies ought to organise themselves, that one is almost inclined to seek out evidence to the contrary. From time to time such evidence was apparent. There was, for example, the special Copenhagen Youth in Employment (Ung i arbejde) project to which a visit was arranged: clearly a cosmetic enterprise for unemployed 18-25 year olds where, after arrangements with the union, the young people are paid more than they could receive in employment (so as to avoid undercutting union members) for working on municipal projects (only those perceived as not taking work from union members) and overseen by highly skilled union member instructors employed on a ratio of one instructor for every five young persons. There were very few young people present on the day I visited because, as was explained to me, the young people had been paid the day before. Denmark, too, has social problems.

Nonetheless, the above was exceptional in that one was confronted with a short-term cosmetic political compromise rather than a long-term planned solution. In other ways, Ung i arbejde was unexceptional in Danish terms: the buildings and equipment were superb, the food splendid, the hospitality gracious and the overall sense of ordered labour (among those young persons present) admirable. It is difficult for the British visitor not to be impressed in Denmark.

In the end, my experience is touched by envy and centred on a number of contrasting truisms:

1. Scale. Small countries - like small enterprises, rooms and books - fit rather easily within the conceptual grasp of a single human mind.

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2. **Resources.** While it may be true that some countries are richer than others and some populations work harder, in Britain, relative to the Danish experience, we have become accustomed to rather low levels of institutional resourcing in our public sector colleges.
3. **Central control.** As has so often been claimed, the glory of the British educational system is its enormous diversity: each of our 104 local authorities in England and Wales, in the interests of meeting local needs, is able to pursue policies and practices widely divergent from those prevalent elsewhere. A rational system necessitates consistency and conformity to a considerable extent; non-rationality and a lack of co-ordination represent the price we pay for regional/instructional independence.
4. **Professionalism.** The amateur tradition still reigns virtually unchallenged in Britain. The Danes are fascinating not only in their adherence to professional ideals in teaching (training, self-motivation, openness to client responses, etc.) but to their broadly based conviction that all forms of industrial and commercial provision are worthy of serious and extended vocational preparation.

Useful addresses

Danish Tourist Board
Sceptre House
169 Regent Street
London W1.

Danish Ministry of Education
International Relations Division
Under-visningsministeriet,
Frederiksholms Kanal 25D,
DK-1220-Copenhagen.

Teacher Training College
Statens Erhvervspaedagogiske Laereruddannelse,
Rigensgade 13,
1316 Copenhagen K.

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